



To: Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health, & Recovery
From: Annie Kirschner, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
RE: Testimony on SB 440 & 555
Date: February 2, 2021

Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee,

My name is Annie Kirschner. I staff the state's Hunger Task Force, and am also the Executive Director of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon. I am writing to support **SB 440 & 555**.

As we take unprecedented measures to protect our communities, our elders, and our neighbors, this legislative session should consider all possible strategies to ensure Oregonians have access to nutritious food during this crisis.

The experience of hunger, though always urgent, has become more widespread than ever before. An estimated 1 million Oregonians can't afford the food we need, twice as many people as before the pandemic. The rate of hunger is twice as high for people who face systemic inequity, particularly Black, Indigenous and Latinx Oregonians.

We're so glad that lawmakers are lifting up the needs of people utilizing SNAP and struggling to make ends meet. SNAP is the cornerstone of this country's response to hunger and currently 900,000 Oregonians have turned to SNAP to afford groceries (500,000 households). Yet the benefit levels are inadequate and currently only cover about 3 weeks worth of groceries.

We support strengthening access to nutritious foods by expanding "Double Up Food Bucks" through SB 555 and SB 440, a SNAP incentive program with a proven record of success. For every dollar spent on SNAP-eligible foods at participating farmers markets, farm share programs, and grocery stores across the state, shoppers will receive a dollar to spend on Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables.

We know from years of talking to constituents that Double Up Food Bucks has made it easier for people to afford the food that's most desired, and now is the time for the state to invest in leveraging this community grown response to food insecurity.